



The Meaning of Friendship

This blog post, by Volunteer Pat McCourt, originally appeared on the [IVC Chicago Footprints](#) blog.

My friend, Kevin, describes himself as a “70-year-old hippie bachelor.” He retired on disability about ten years ago and has lived in his parents’ Rogers Park condominium since they passed away. He lives very simply with few possessions that he has purchased. Almost everything in his condo belonged to his parents, including all the furniture. His well-worn clothes are either too baggy or too tight. He has never owned a car.

My role when I started visiting Kevin two years ago for IVC was to eliminate some of his clutter and organize his paperwork. We have gone to the Laundromat a few times. He was usually hungry so I would bring a couple of Subway sandwiches so we could have lunch together and talk. It didn’t take too long to figure out he needed other assistance.

A major problem was that he had no working appliances. During the winter, Kevin put milk and restaurant take-out leftovers on his porch to stay cold. His refrigerator, stove and dishwasher had been inoperable for many years. After much discussion, he agreed to shop for new appliances, which he could afford to pay for from his savings. During our trip to Home Depot he was unusually excited and talkative, asking many questions of the salesperson. He was clearly enjoying the outing. He negotiated a great deal and had a wide smile when we left the store. He told me that he had never shopped for or bought an appliance in his entire life. I thought—how could that be? Then I realized this was truly a “God is present in everything all the time” moment.

Here is someone who is thoughtful, intelligent and whose interest in personal possessions is almost zero. What I have not mentioned is Kevin’s very active social life. He enjoys going to dinner and the opera with his many friends and his phone frequently rings with buddies checking up on him. His best friend now lives out of state and just left Kevin’s after a week-long visit. Kevin’s priorities are his friends, not possessions. He makes his friends feel good because there are no strings attached. I am thankful I am one of them now and I look forward to a long friendship.

Pat McCourt joined IVC as a Volunteer in 2011. He serves at Caring Connections for Seniors, now part of Northside Community Resources located on the north side of Chicago. He provides transportation and household help for seniors and others in the area. Before joining IVC, Pat worked at a commercial real estate company in suburban Chicagoland for 34 years as an industrial broker.